

Talking Points for Dr. Aaron Stern, MDRO
Learning-Workshop on Conducting Initial Rapid
Assessments in Emergencies and Disasters
Cagayan De Oro City
August 6-8, 2008

- "Magandang umaga!" (Good morning!)
- I am delighted and honored to be with you this morning on behalf of the United States Government to be part of the opening ceremony of this three-day workshop on initial rapid assessment during emergencies and disasters. Thank you very much for coming.
- It is a distinct pleasure for the US Agency for International Development (or USAID) to play a part in supporting this very timely workshop, principally through our Disaster Preparedness and Response in Mindanao Project (or DPR-Mindanao) implemented by Save the Children.
- DPR-Mindanao was launched in March 2003 with the purpose of addressing the plight of children and their families who were displaced by the armed clashes between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Fund (or MILF).
- Now in its fifth year of implementation, the Project has achieved an important milestone by setting up of the Mindanao Emergency Response Network (or MERN) whose members are mostly, if not all, represented in today's workshop.
- I joined USAID/Philippines in March of this year and I have already heard so many good things about the MERN's work on implementing and coordinating relief operations, rehabilitation, and humanitarian activities in Mindanao. You can certainly take

pride in yourselves for being instrumental in the robust emergency response and preparedness capabilities present in Mindanao.

- We recognize and appreciate that all of you have taken time out from your very busy schedules to come here to share your experiences in conducting initial rapid assessments (or IRAs) during emergencies and disasters in your respective areas. With this workshop, we hope that you will be able to strengthen your conduct of IRAs so you can provide a rapid overview of the emergency situation thereby identify the immediate impacts of the crisis, estimate needs and ongoing vulnerabilities of the affected population and define the priorities for humanitarian action.
- The Philippines remains very vulnerable to natural disasters, a reality some of you know very well just having suffered the effects of Typhoon Frank in June.
- In addition to natural hazards, sporadic armed conflict in Mindanao has displaced thousands of people, another challenge you have all long faced in Mindanao.
- On behalf of USAID, I congratulate you for your great dedication and tireless work in rehabilitating your communities. By working together towards mitigating the devastating effects of natural and human-made disasters, we can help to avoid unnecessary loss of lives and properties.
- I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of the different levels of the Philippine Government's disaster coordinating councils with whom the MERN has worked to improve coordination of disaster preparedness and response in their provinces.

- In closing, I would like to commend the hardworking management and staff of Save the Children as well as the Philippine Government and United Nations' ACT for Peace Program for sponsoring and organizing this very worthwhile and timely workshop.
- I wish you all a productive and fruitful workshop.
- Thank you.